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AMGT, GG

SUBJECT: TFGG01: GEORGIA TASK FORCE SITUATION REPORT NO. 21

RUSSIAN DEPARTURE UNCONFIRMED; KOKOITY SEEKS ARMY BASE

1. (SBU) Embassy Tbilisi cannot confirm the movements of Russian troops, though journalists traveling between Gori and Tbilisi told post the troops expect to depart ?soon.? (TF/Embassy Tbilisi telcon)

2. (U) De facto South Ossetian President Kokoity dismissed his cabinet due to delays in the distribution of humanitarian assistance. Kokoity also signed a state of emergency order and established an economic reconstruction commission for Tskhinvali and surrounding areas. (themoscowtimes.com)

3. (U) Kokoity told the media ?international observers will no longer be present on the territory of South Ossetia,? and indicated he would seek a permanent Russian military base in the disputed region. (Reuters)

MERKEL, IN TBILISI, CALLS FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

4. (U) The German Chancellor said, ?Georgia will become a member of NATO, if it wants to - and it does want to.? The statement signaled a change in Germany's stance on Georgia's NATO

membership, according to the press. (AP)

¶5. (SBU) The OSCE has yet to request airlift support from member states for the armored personnel carriers needed for its additional observers in Georgia. (TF/Embassy Tbilisi telcon)

IDP ASSISTANCE CONTINUES; TURKEY HELPS WITH FIRES

¶6. (SBU) Embassy Tbilisi estimates 15-20,000 people will remain permanent IDPs following the withdrawal of Russian troops. Post is encouraging the Georgian government to publicize assistance networks, including clinics, currently available for the 80,000 displaced persons in Tbilisi. (TF/Embassy Tbilisi telcon)

¶7. (SBU) An Embassy Tbilisi team will travel to Poti with representatives of the World Food Programme to distribute unused MREs from planned military training. (TF/Embassy Tbilisi telcon)

¶8. (SBU) Embassy Tbilisi confirms Turkish aircraft are now assisting the fight against forest fires in Borjomi. (TF/Embassy Tbilisi telcon)

¶9. (SBU) As of August 17, overall USG humanitarian assistance totals approximately \$4.2 million in emergency relief, including bedding, blankets, and medical supplies. (TF/USAID e-mail)

¶10. (U) Minimize considered.
RICE